

Housing Secretary extends support for renters during pandemic

- Renters protected with ban on bailiff enforced evictions extended until 31 March
- Exemptions in place for the most serious cases
- Part of a wider package of support for renters during the pandemic

Renters will continue to be supported during the ongoing national lockdown restrictions, with an extension to the ban on bailiff evictions, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (14 February 2021).

The ban on bailiff evictions – which was introduced at the start of the pandemic – has been extended for another 6 weeks – until 31 March – with measures kept under review in line with the latest public health advice.

Exemptions remain in place for the most serious circumstances that cause the greatest strain on landlords as well as other residents and neighbours, such as illegal occupation, anti-social behaviour and arrears of 6 months' rent or more.

The measures are part of a wide-ranging package of support the government has provided to protect renters from the economic impact of the pandemic, including supporting businesses to pay staff through the furlough scheme and strengthening the welfare safety-net by billions of pounds.

Landlords are also required to give 6-month notice periods to tenants before starting possession proceedings, except in the most serious circumstances, meaning that most renters now served notice can stay in their homes until at least August 2021, with time to find alternative support or accommodation.

For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

Housing Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We have taken unprecedented action to support renters during the pandemic including introducing a six-month notice period and financial support to help those struggling to pay their rent.

By extending the ban on the enforcement of evictions by bailiffs, in all but the most serious cases, we are ensuring renters remain protected during this difficult time.

Our measures strike the right balance between protecting tenants and enabling landlords to exercise their right to justice.

Court rules and procedures introduced in September to support both tenants and landlords will remain in place and regularly reviewed, with courts continuing to prioritise the most cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation and perpetrators of domestic abuse in the social sector.

The government has also launched a new free mediation pilot to support landlords and tenants to resolve disputes before a formal court hearing takes place. This will help tenants at an early stage of the possession process, mitigating the risk of tenants becoming homeless and helping to sustain tenancies where possible.

Together these measures strike the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice in the most serious cases.

The package of support is reducing the number of evictions as applications to the courts for possession by private and social landlords were down 67% between October and December 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019. The number of repossessions recorded October to December 2020 was down 93% compared to the same quarter in 2019. Only 548 repossessions were recorded between April and December 2020 compared to 22,444 in the same period in 2019.

The government previously changed the law in England to ensure bailiffs do not enforce evictions for 6 weeks until 22 February. This has now been extended for a further 6 weeks until 31 March. This will be kept under review.

The only exceptions to this are for the most egregious cases – anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation, death of a tenant where the property is unoccupied, fraud, perpetrators of domestic abuse in social housing and rent arrears equivalent to at least 6 months' rent.

[Guidance](#) to support landlords and tenants in the social and private rented sectors understand the possession action process and new rules within the court system in England and Wales is available.

Prime Minister to host virtual meeting of G7 leaders

- PM will use the first leaders' meeting of the UK's G7 Presidency to call for further international cooperation on vaccine distribution and to build back better from coronavirus
- Prime Minister will call for a new, global approach to pandemics that learns lessons from the division that characterised the initial

international response to the coronavirus pandemic

- This month the PM and Foreign Secretary will chair meetings of the UN Security Council focused on coronavirus, conflict and climate change

On Friday (19th February) the Prime Minister will host fellow G7 leaders for a virtual meeting to discuss how the world's leading democracies can work together to ensure equitable distribution of coronavirus vaccines around the world, prevent future pandemics and build back better from coronavirus.

Friday's meeting will be the first hosted by the PM as part of the UK's G7 Presidency this year and the first gathering of G7 leaders since April 2020.

The Prime Minister will use the meeting, which will also be US President Biden's first major multilateral engagement, to call for leaders to work together on a joined-up global approach to pandemics that brings an end to the nationalist and divisive politics that marred the initial response to coronavirus.

He will argue that putting our citizens first should not come at the expense of working on a unified response, and that the last twelve months of the pandemic have showed that no country can be safe until every country is safe from the pandemic. The rollout of vaccines offers a fresh opportunity to demonstrate the value of international cooperation.

International pandemic preparedness will be a major priority for the UK's G7 Presidency and the Prime Minister will work with fellow G7 leaders to implement his five-point plan to prevent future pandemics announced at the UN General Assembly last year.

The five point plan includes a worldwide network of zoonotic research hubs, developing global manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines, the design of a global pandemic early warning system, the agreement of global protocols for a future health emergency and the reduction of trade barriers.

There have already been positive steps to ensure equitable access to a coronavirus vaccine. Last month the US announced it would join the COVAX initiative, becoming the final G7 country to do so. COVAX will provide developing countries with 1.3 billion doses of the vaccine this year and the UK is providing £548m to the scheme.

In recent weeks the UK has worked closely with G7 partners on a huge range of global issues and shared challenges. On Friday, the Chancellor and Governor of the Bank of England held the first meeting of G7 Finance Ministers. G7 Foreign Ministers have spoken out together in the last month in condemnation of the military coup of Myanmar, the detention of Alexey Navalny in Russia and threats to human rights in Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister said:

The solutions to the challenges we face – from the colossal mission to get vaccines to every single country, to the fight to reverse

the damage done to our ecosystems and lead a sustainable recovery from coronavirus – lie in the discussions we have with our friends and partners around the world.

Quantum leaps in science have given us the vaccines we need to end this pandemic for good. Now world governments have a responsibility to work together to put those vaccines to the best possible use. I hope 2021 will be remembered as the year humanity worked together like never before to defeat a common foe.

During February the UK also holds the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council, which rotates between members every month. The UK is using this Presidency to galvanise international action on coronavirus, climate change and conflict.

On the 23rd February the Prime Minister will chair a virtual meeting of the UN Security Council on the link between climate change and conflict. This is the first time a UK Prime Minister has chaired a Security Council session since 1992. The discussions at the meeting will inform crucial action ahead of the UK-hosted COP26 Summit in November. This Wednesday the Foreign Secretary will host a UN meeting on equitable access to vaccines and ensuring they get to people in conflict zones and during humanitarian crises.

[Surge testing to be deployed in areas within Middlesbrough, Walsall, and Hampshire in connection to new variant](#)



Working in partnership with the local authorities, additional surge testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas within parts of the TS7 and TS8 postcodes of Middlesbrough, areas in Walsall and in specific areas in the RG26 postcode in Hampshire where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Surge testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing,

and in combination with following the lockdown rules and remembering Hands Face Space, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus.

Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within these targeted areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way, and those without symptoms should visit their local authority website for more information.

Surge testing in the Egham and Broxbourne areas, which began on February 6 and February 1, is now complete and further data on surge testing will be provided in due course.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Middlesbrough Council will deploy a Mobile Testing Unit from Saturday and encourage residents from a targeted area to come forward for a test.

The surge testing operation in parts of Walsall has been extended in response to a confirmed second case of the variant first identified in South Africa which is not believed to be linked to international travel. Surge testing in response to the first case has now been completed.

Published 13 February 2021

Last updated 13 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 13 February 2021

Additional postcode in Middlesborough added to the testing areas

2. 13 February 2021

First published.

[Transport Secretary hails work of transport industry in vaccination roll-out](#)

- Transport Secretary virtually visits mass vaccination centre at St Helens Stadium in the north west to see first-hand the efforts of those involved in delivering the roll-out

- Grant Shapps hails work of transport operators helping people get their vaccinations, as people aged 70 and over encouraged to contact NHS
- to improve access to vaccine sites, rail and bus operators are adding stops and changing routes, including new or free services

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps hailed the efforts of transport operators and employees across the country who have gone above and beyond to help [the nation's coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination roll-out](#), as government remains on track to meet its target of offering a first dose to those in the top 4 priority groups by 15 February 2021.

From the NHS and Metrobus working together to launch the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination unit and a bus targeting hard-to-reach communities in Crawley through to rail and bus operators changing routes, adding stops and putting on free bus services, the industry is playing a vital role in helping people get their vaccinations.

It comes as the Transport Secretary met Dr Hilary Flett, GP clinical lead for vaccination roll-out, and volunteers at a mass vaccination centre at St Helens rugby league club's stadium to see first-hand how the roll-out is being delivered.

The Totally Wicked Stadium hosts both the GP-led Primary Care Network (PCN) vaccination clinic as well as the mass vaccination centre for St Helens and surrounding boroughs.

More than 14 million people have now received their first dose of the vaccine.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Throughout this pandemic, our transport heroes have been at the frontline keeping the country moving. Now they are stepping up yet again to help deliver the vaccinations and get people to vaccination centres, helping us fight back from COVID-19.

We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the medical staff and volunteers at St Helens, supporting people to get their vital jabs.

I urge everyone aged 70 and over who hasn't yet had a vaccination to come forward and contact the NHS to get their jab.

Dr Hilary Flett, St Helens GP and clinical lead for the PCN vaccination rollout in St Helens, said:

All 33 GP practices in St Helens have been working together since before Christmas to provide a service to vaccinate eligible patients, including house-bound and care home residents, and care home staff.

To date, we have vaccinated 80% of our GP registered population who are in priority groups 1 to 4, which is over 25,000 residents.

As well as working tirelessly to help keep the trains and stations running safely throughout the pandemic, [Network Rail](#) has continued to contribute towards overcoming COVID-19 away from the tracks by volunteering to help set up the new large-scale vaccination centre near Exeter, Devon.

Workers recently gave up their time to unload around 100 pallets of equipment from articulated lorries and set it up inside the main building at Westpoint, Exeter.

Graham Vidler, Chief Executive of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, said:

Bus and coach operators across the country have been delighted to be able to play their part in the national effort to vaccinate against COVID-19.

Operators have provided extra services and stops to help get people to vaccination centres and local GP surgeries across the country, showcasing the vital role buses and coaches play in helping people move from A to B.

Over the course of the pandemic, the transport sector has stepped up to support the vaccination roll-out in a wide range of ways, including:

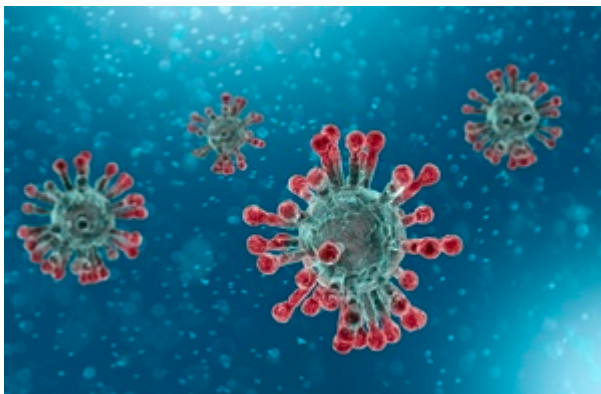
- the NHS and **Metrobus** have launched one of the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination units in a bus in Crawley, targeting hard-to-reach and vulnerable communities
- **Great Western Railway** has put in place additional station stops on trains between Paddington and Bedwyn to help those travelling to the new vaccination centre established at Newbury Racecourse
- in Hartlepool, **Stagecoach's** Tees Flex bus, a partnership service with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, is offering a bespoke service for healthcare workers travelling between Hartlepool and North Tees Hospital
- **Go North East, Nexus** and **Go Ahead** have worked together to put on 3 free-to-use vaccination centre shuttle buses operating to Nightingale Hospital vaccination centre in Washington, and have set up a new dedicated bus stop
- in Newcastle, **Go North East** has launched a network of vaccination shuttle buses for the North East Nightingale Hospital and is set to launch a vaccination bus in the coming weeks
- **Arriva** will be operating 2 free shuttle services, in partnership with Shropshire Council, to the new NHS Vaccination Centre at Sports Village in Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury
- **Arriva's** Derby's Pride Park and Ride's Saturday timetable will be increased to run every 30 minutes throughout the day, from 7.30am to 6.00pm, to provide a service for the public attending the NHS vaccination centre at Pride Park

- the **Oxford Bus Company** and **Stagecoach* have amended services to provide links to the new mass COVID-19 vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford
 - Harrogate's leading bus operator, **the Harrogate Bus Company**, is to provide a free bus service to make travel easier for COVID-19 jab appointments at the town's vaccination centre
 - **LNER** has made more than 370 free car parking spaces available for people attending the NHS COVID-19 vaccine clinic at Newcastle's Life Science Centre
 - *local and national firms* have offered free travel to vaccination centres including in Burnley, Shrewsbury, while **Uber** is offering free rides so people can get their jab right across the country
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Groundbreaking COVID-19 treatments to be fast-tracked through clinical trials

Press release

The world's most innovative treatments for COVID-19 will soon be fast-tracked through the UK's clinical trial system, as the government announces funding for the most promising treatments.



- Government awards multi-million-pound funding to phase 1 clinical trial platform to fast-track innovative treatments
- NHS patients could receive cutting-edge COVID-19 treatments in months rather than years
- Move will bring in the world's best researchers to trial treatments in the UK

The move marks a landmark development in COVID-19 research that could see results for brand new treatments in months rather than years, and will enable the government to get even more safe and effective treatments to the NHS

rapidly through a more streamlined process.

Currently, the government funds phase 2 and 3 trials, such as the RECOVERY trial, which brought life-saving treatments dexamethasone and tocilizumab to the NHS. Phase 1 trials, usually arranged by the researchers, are the earliest stage of human trials that ensure treatments are safe and show a signal of benefit in treating a disease.

The funding has been awarded to expand the AGILE clinical trial platform and will allow for global innovators to progress cutting-edge treatments for COVID-19 through all 3 clinical trial phases in the UK, further protecting our supply chain. This in turn will attract the brightest of researchers and manufacturers from around the world to trial their medicines here in Britain.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Today's news will ensure all phases of clinical trials for new treatments are done in the UK, protecting our supply chain and securing the world's best treatments for NHS patients at a much faster rate.

I am immensely proud of the work that's been undertaken by the brilliant scientists behind these treatments and the thousands of UK patients who have taken part in the trials.

Together, we can continue to ensure the UK is one of the best countries in the world for trialling and deploying the most groundbreaking medical advancements for both COVID-19 and for dangerous diseases in the future.

The funding has been awarded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and co-funded through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

A phase 1 trial is the earliest stage of human trials and is an essential first step that ensures treatments are safe. Once they pass phase 1, they then go into larger-scale phase 2 and 3 trials, such as RECOVERY or PRINCIPLE, before being made available on the NHS once proven to be effective.

The UK has proven throughout this pandemic to be a world leader in medical research and life sciences, stepping up quickly to the task of finding effective therapeutics for a completely new virus and supported by millions in funding by the UK government.

- [AGILE](#) is a UK phase 1 and 2a clinical trial platform designed for rapid clinical evaluation of potential COVID-19 treatments
- It is a collaboration between the University of Liverpool, the University of Southampton Research Unit, and other external partners

- The innovative design of the trial means that multiple potential treatments can be evaluated in parallel and important testing stages can be completed in months rather than years, while maintaining a high level of safety at all times
- Patients in early stages of COVID-19 infection will be recruited to AGILE from the community, in addition to patients who have been hospitalised with COVID-19
- Treatments that show a signal of benefit in AGILE will be rapidly considered for advancement into later phase clinical trial platforms, such as PRINCIPLE and RECOVERY, where the effectiveness of treatments can be proven in greater patient numbers
- The Therapeutics Taskforce will work with innovators to support them to progress their promising treatments through clinical trial phases
- 4 treatments have so far been selected for AGILE:
 - EIDD-2801 (Molnupiravir), an antiviral
 - VIR-7831 and VIR-7832, both monoclonal antibodies
 - Niclosamide, an anthelmintic
- Future treatments to enter AGILE will be selected by the UK COVID-19 Therapeutics Advisory Panel (UK-CTAP), who lead the process of reviewing and evaluating proposals for treatments to enter UK national trial platforms – [read more about UK-CTAP and how drug proposals can be made](#)
- The UK was the first in the world to find a treatment which was proven to significantly reduce the risk of death: dexamethasone, found through the government-funded RECOVERY trial
- On Thursday 11 February, RECOVERY also found the drug tocilizumab, when administered to hospitalised patients on oxygen with dexamethasone, further reduces the risk of death by 14% and length of hospital stay for patients by 5 whole days, on top of the benefits of dexamethasone – which will mean once rolled out to patients will significantly reduce pressures on the NHS
- REMAP-CAP, which also received government funding, last month published results showing tocilizumab reduced the length of time in hospital by 10 days when administered to patients with 24 hours of being admitted to intensive care